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Long Ave. #5

MESSAGE

Of The

GOVERNOR,

IN RELATION TO A MEMORIAL FROM HALF-BREEDS OF
PEMBINA.

Message from the Governor

To the Council and House of Representatives of the Legislative Assembly of Minnesota:

GENTLEMEN:—

I herewith communicate to your honorable bodies the translation of a memorial numerously signed by half-breeds, residents of Pembina, on the Red River of the North.

You will perceive that it is a complaint of the grievances they suffer, embodying suggestions for remedying their wrongs, and is appropriately addressed, mainly to the general Government at Washington, for relief.

But as they are, in common with ourselves, Minnesotians, and as such deserving of our warmest sympathies, in their remote and comparatively unprotected and uncared for home, I have thought it proper to invite the aid of your influence in pressing their just claims upon the kind consideration of the national authorities.

My information in regard to these people from all sources is, that they are a bold, honest and hardy race, pursuing most industriously their mixed occupation of hunting and agriculture; that they are characterized by more than ordinary intelligence for their class and opportunities; and that altogether they form a valuable acquisition to the population of this Territory and of our common country.

They reside upon a fertile soil, that produces or is capable of producing in abundance wheat, rye, corn, potatoes, and all the vegetable and animal productions necessary to human subsistence and comfort.

They occupy a point on our frontiers from whence are commanded the

the buffalo ranges of the immense plains to the south and west, and hundreds of their mounted hunters, issue forth twice a year, in the spring and fall, and slay thousands of buffalo, converting their meat, hides and tallow into articles of profitable merchandise.

The interference of the settlers within the British lines with them, in this their main pursuit, demands that the National Government should abate the evil and jealously maintain the integrity of our Territory by repressing the intrusions of subjects of a foreign power, that churlishly refuses all reciprocity; and so preserve to our people advantages which nature has bestowed almost exclusively upon our Territory, wherein not only the larger animals of the chase, but these also valuable entirely for their furs, prefer to range, because their subsistence is easy from the abundance of their natural food spontaneously produced by a fertile and congenial soil.

It is worthy of consideration, likewise, whether such a course is not dictated by sound policy in another respect.

Since the census of Pembina in June last, when the population was about six hundred, it has, according to the memorial, increased to near a thousand souls in consequence, I believe, of further immigration from the British side of the line.

Such immigration is occasioned, it would appear, partly by dissatisfaction with the rule of the authorities of the Hudson Bay Company, and partly by an appreciation of the superiority of our Territory for permanent settlement; but chiefly in view of the facilities offered for hunting, the great buffalo ranges

being nearly altogether within the American lines.

If by establishing a military post at Pembina, and extending over the settlement our civil law, through organized counties and courts of justice, we can confine the British hunters and half-breeds exclusively to their inferior hunting ranges, the advantages of immigrating to Minnesota rather than remain in British Territory, would so greatly preponderate that but a short time would elapse before the body of the population in the neighborhood of Pembina would reach to five or six thousand in number, forming on the frontier an indomitable barrier to aggression, whether by savages or a foreign power, besides gaining so many additional arms to contribute to the commonwealth and prosperity of our country.

Under these views of things, it occurs to me that the first step towards any efficient relief is the extinguishment of the title of occupancy in the lands on the Red River of the north; the extension of our land system or a modification of it thereto; and the organization of counties and courts therein, so that our fellow citizens of mixed blood on the frontiers may enjoy in common with ourselves the precious privileges of free, just and liberal institutions.

A memorial from the Legislative Assembly of Minnesota would induce Congress to act in the premises, and is due from us to our brethren in the north.

ALEX. RAMSEY.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, }
St. Paul, Oct. 1, '49. }
